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PSYCHIC EFFECTS OF THE WEATHER.

By J. S. LEMON.

Psychology is now studied from many points of view, but the relation of psychic processes to weather has never received much attention. The subject opens a field as large as it is new, in which the writer has for some years been collecting materials. The following note may suffice to show the scope of the subject, till a fuller and more systematic presentation I hope to make ere long:

That all the world is interested in the weather is shown in the forms of salutation in every language I have been able to learn of. This interest was, of course, deeper when the race lived more out of doors; but we shall never be independent of thermometers and barometers. Things in general remain fixed, but weather is variable. What attracts attention first daily is still for most people the sky, clouds, wind, etc. What we term "weather" is a product of several variables—moisture, temperature, pressure, ozone and electricity at least. Several of these usually change together, if not all, so that to study man as a weather indicator, we need not go to the hospital or sick room, nor consider exceptional phenomena like tornadoes, cyclones and hurricanes. "Weather" is most prominent in the temperate zones, where the quantum of changes in all these variables is greatest and most frequent. Every long hot or cold term, or other exceptional state, affects the death rate. Unseasonable or anti-seasonable changes are especially fatal.

Many savage and ancient people believed deities, friendly and unfriendly to man, contended in hot and cold, moist and dry, and strove to appease storm and wind gods. From very early times, predictions have been essayed, and weather prophets have won renown. Some of the great crises of human history have been determined by weather. So that it is no wonder omens have been sought and held in high favor. That the sun plays so great a rôle in weather changes is one cause of the prevalence of solar myths, descriptions of storms as battles, of hostile deities, the lightning myths Kühne has collected, and from those times down to the modern sun bath, blue glass craze, hot and cold baths, ozone inhalations, electricity, weather factors have entered prominently into therapeutics. So out of the range of human control have been balmy winds and lovely skies and sunshine, that it is not strange that religious people in Christian lands and ages have been moved to seek the help of God for propitious weather. We notice in the last revision of the Episcopal Prayer Book that prayers for favorable weather, for rain, for safe voyages, for protection from lightning, etc., have been retained. So the Romans sought skyey auspices, and the Athenians prayed for rain. Atheists often become quite orthodox in storms, and the superstitions of seamen are well known. Once, when it was thought bad weather was due to Satanic

influences, Pope Innocent had a manual prepared to be used by the clergy in unfavorable weather, and for the expulsion of demons. Seneca attributed weather to certain inexorable beings and left no place for appeal to deity to change it. Very likely one difficulty monotheism has constantly had against it at every stage, is the difficulty of conceiving how one deity could produce such diverse and opposite kinds of weather.

Sidney Smith wrote: "Very high and very low temperatures establish all human sympathy and relations. It is impossible to feel affection above seventy-eight degrees, or below twenty degrees F. Human nature is too solid or too liquid beyond these limits. Man lives to shiver and perspire." Seneca said: "The empire of the world has always remained in the hands of those natures who enjoy a mild climate. Those who dwell near the frozen north have uncivilized tempers." Some think clothing, which has so profoundly modified man's moral and physical constitution, was due, not to modesty chiefly at least, but to weather extremes. We seem more delicate, and less able to bear weather than our ancestors, without modern protection.

Dr. Farr, of England, and Dr. Stark, of Edinburgh, almost lead us to think morality is registered on the thermometer, so surely does it measure certain kinds of criminality. S. A. Hill, of India, believes forty-eight per cent. of crimes of violence disappear in cold weather. I shall dwell at length later upon the psychic effects of weather on the insane and idiotic, and upon certain forms of disease. Certain tendencies are repressed and counter influences set at work or made dormant. A sudden rise of temperature predisposes those liable to an attack of mania. Some patients are so sensitive to and dependent on the weather that they anticipate the thermometer and barometer. One sign of growing neurotic diathesis is inability to keep at the top of one's condition and in good tone in unusual weather. On suicides the effects of the weather are well known. The interesting little book of weather proverbs, published by the weather bureau, is a psychological treasure-house upon all this subject.

Nearly all vocations—some, of course, more than others—are affected by weather. Men of science are often as much subject to weather as seamen. Some writers must have the weather fit the mood, character or scene, and can do nothing if they are at variance. An adverse temperature brings them to a dead halt. If one will but read poetry attentively, he will be surprised to find how much of it bears weather marks, scattered all through it. A popular writer thinks weather often affects logic, and that many men's most syllogistic conclusions are varied by heat and cold. Diverse weather states may be one cause of so much diversity and even disagreement in thought processes, usually regarded as scientific. I have collected opinions of many experienced teachers, and nearly all think there should be modification of both school work and discipline to correspond with weather. Animals respond to it promptly and with no restraint, and almost constitute a sort of weather signal service if observed. Ancient prognostics were based here. Dunwoody, *e. g.*, gives lists of animals which become restless before rain.

The fact that now our property as well as our comfort depend on the weather has given weather a new power as an excitant which dwellings and clothing had lessened. Jesus, Mat. 16:23, rebukes over-sensitiveness to weather. Man should be joyful or depressed, optimistic or pessimistic over other things than this. The anxiety expressed by the directors of the world's fair about the weather of

the opening day was a strain which suggested suffering. Some have said that a certain very famous criminal was acquitted last August solely because the stifling air of the court room made it impossible to follow a severe logical argument. The weather bureau does a great work in economic psychology.

We have gathered a long list of ejaculatory expressions, and unpremeditated remarks concerning weather, which furnish data of interest. Commercial travelers often make much account of it. The head of a factory employing 3,000 workmen said: "We reckon that a disagreeable day yields about ten per cent. less work than a delightful day, and we thus have to count this as a factor in our profit and loss account." Accidents are more numerous in factories on bad days. A railroad man never proposes changes to his superior if the weather is not propitious. Fair days make men accessible and generous, and open to consider new problems favorably. Some say that opinions reached in best weather states are safest to invest on. "I never," says one, "make any important agreements or bargains when the sun shines and I am at my best." Most remarks about the weather are made in the morning, then we settle to it as an accepted fact. Women accept the weather, and, unlike men, very rarely express indignation if it is not to their mind.

Nothing is more curious than the way these ideas have been wrought into description of heaven and hell, whether in heathen, classic or Christian writings. Hell is very hot or cold, and aggravates pains of all diseases. The *Dies Iræ* was a day of wrath suggested by a day of storm and earthquake. Read the well-known hymns beginning, "Hark, hark my soul," "O mother, dear Jerusalem," "Jerusalem, the golden," and many, many others.

Laboratory investigation of the subject meets at the outset the difficulty of distinguishing results of weather changes from similar states otherwise caused. This difficulty is no greater than are many other topics of research, and we believe will not invalidate our methods and results. All our senses put us in rapport with the external world. The knee-jerk seems proven to have a weather factor. It is not strange if the eye, *e. g.*, which wants the normal stimulus, in long dark weather causes other changes. Changing moisture in the air changes odors, and many appetites are affected, as touch is still more obviously. Tea tasters work best on fair days.

CLARK UNIVERSITY, July, 1893.